



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **MORE THAN 300 SCHOOL CHILDREN WILL GATHER FOR L.A. COUNTY'S LARGEST SUMMIT ON BULLYING**

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas and the nonprofit organization Special Needs Network (SNN) will host Los Angeles County's largest summit on bullying Friday, April 12 with students from four Los Angeles Unified School District schools to discuss the devastating effects of bullying. The gathering, called iStand4Peace, will take place in the Town and Gown Hall on the campus of the University of Southern California from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The event will feature 13-year-old singer, songwriter and author Shanaya Fastje, and other speakers who will share their personal bullying stories with the crowd. Students also will watch "The Bully Effect," a documentary produced by CNN's Anderson Cooper. Surveys indicate that as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during their school years, and at least 10 percent are bullied on a regular basis. Bullying can lead to depression, anger issues and even suicide.

"Bullying is a national epidemic, but its roots are always local – it starts in our schools, our neighborhoods, and sadly, even in the home," said Ridley-Thomas, who is also a former high school teacher. "We appreciate the opportunity to partner with the Special Needs Network on this important event."

"It's time for every community in our country to come together and teach our children the importance of being kind," said Areva Martin, founder of the Special Needs Network, an advocacy organization for children with disabilities. "The effort to stop bullying starts with one's self. That is the message we are trying to convey to all students including educating them on the devastating effects of bullying on students with autism and other special needs."

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